

YEMEN 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yemen is a republic with a constitution that provides for a president, a parliament, and an independent judiciary, but control of the country during the year was split among three entities: the Iran-backed Ansar Allah movement (also sometimes known colloquially as the Houthis), the internationally recognized government of Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates-backed Southern Transitional Council. The last presidential election occurred in 2012, when Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi won a two-year mandate as president.

The primary state security and intelligence-gathering entities of the internationally recognized government of Yemen are the Political Security Organization and the National Security Bureau. By law both organizations report first to the interior minister and then to the president. The Criminal Investigation Division, an arm of the Ministry of Interior that conducts most criminal investigations and arrests, the paramilitary Special Security Forces, and the counterterrorism unit report to the interior minister. The Ministry of Defense supervised units to quell domestic unrest. Competing tribal, party, and sectarian influences reduced the exercise of governance in many areas. Houthi forces controlled most of the residual national security entities in sections of the north and other former state institutions. The government of Yemen staffed national security entities in areas under its control, although large areas under nominal government of Yemen control were effectively controlled by tribal leaders and local military commanders. The Southern Transitional Council had physical control of security in large areas of the south, including the government's temporary capital of Aden. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control over security forces. There were credible reports that members of security forces on all sides committed abuses.

In 2014 Houthi forces aligned with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh occupied the capital, Sana'a, and ignited a civil conflict that continued during the year. After President Hadi fled to Aden and then Saudi Arabia, he requested international assistance to restore the government, and in 2015, Saudi Arabia launched Operation "Decisive Storm." Following fighting in 2019 that

resulted in the government's departure from its temporary capital, Saudi Arabia helped broker a power-sharing deal, dubbed the "Riyadh Agreement," between the government of Yemen and the secessionist Southern Transitional Council that led to the formation of a new coalition government in December 2020.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings by all parties; forced disappearances by all parties; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by all parties; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners and detainees; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious abuses in a conflict, including widespread civilian harm, and unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by all parties to the conflict, particularly the Houthis; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including violence, threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, censorship, and the existence of criminal libel laws; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions of religious freedom; restrictions on freedom of movement; inability of citizens to choose their government peacefully through free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; serious government corruption; serious government restrictions on international human rights organizations; lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence, including but not limited to domestic, intimate partner violence or both, as well as sexual violence; child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. There were significant barriers to accessing reproductive health; existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults; and existence of the worst forms of child labor.

Impunity for security officials remained a problem, in part because the government exercised limited authority and failed to investigate and prosecute abuse and corruption. Houthi control over former government institutions in the north severely reduced the government's capacity to conduct investigations. The government of Yemen's prime minister reactivated anticorruption entities and launched audits of state revenues and the central bank. Separately, the Houthis used former anticorruption authorities to stifle dissent and repress their political

opponents.

Nongovernmental actors, including the Houthis, tribal militias, the Southern Transitional Council, and terrorist groups (including al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and a local branch of ISIS), committed significant abuses with impunity. Saudi-led coalition air strikes resulted in civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure. (See the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran.)

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were numerous reports of government, progovernment, rebel, terrorist, and foreign forces committing arbitrary or unlawful killings (see section 1.g.).

In August the Yemen-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Abductees' Mothers Association stated it documented the torture and death of 40 abductees and detainees in Houthi detention facilities since 2014. Media reported other sources citing as many as 350 persons died from torture and "deliberate medical negligence" in Houthi prisons since 2014.

On August 28, a Yemeni human rights defense lawyer and the Geneva-based SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties separately reported that the Houthi-controlled "Specialized Criminal Court" in Sana'a sentenced 11 defendants to death for "aiding the enemy" and "communicating with a hostile foreign country." The prosecution did not adhere to minimal fair trial procedures, including by pressuring some of the accused to not request legal representation. No further information was available on their cases.

On September 19, the Houthis executed nine individuals, including one juvenile, after an unfair trial for an unsubstantiated charge of involvement in the killing of a Houthi leader in a 2018 air strike.

Media sources in November reported on the death of Houthi detainee Saleh Ali Makaber after psychological and physical torture and denial of medical treatment.

The sources cited family members' reporting that the Houthis subjected Makaber to continuous torture since his 2020 capture and that he died from kidney failure after the Houthis refused to allow his transfer to a hospital.

On September 8, forces aligned with the Southern Transitional Council detained, robbed, tortured, and killed Abdulmalik al-Sanabani in the Tour al-Baha district of Lahj province. According to media reports, the soldiers suspected Sanabani, who was returning to his hometown in the northern part of the country from the United States, of supporting the Houthis. The Southern Transition Council announced the formation of a committee to investigate; it claimed to have arrested the soldiers involved but did not subsequently hold them accountable.

b. Disappearance

In a September report, the UN Human Rights Council Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE) assessed that parties to the conflict continued to engage in enforced disappearances (see section 1.g.).

In August the Abductees' Mothers Association stated that since its founding in 2016, it had documented 152 cases of forcibly disappeared civilians, of which progovernment security forces were responsible for one case, the Houthis for 104 cases, and the Southern Transitional Council for 47 cases.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution prohibits torture and other such abuses. Although the law lacks a comprehensive definition of torture, there are provisions allowing prison terms of up to 10 years for those convicted of torture. In a September report, the GEE assessed that parties to the conflict continued to engage in torture and other forms of mistreatment. Journalists, human rights defenders, and migrants were among the victims of these abuses (see section 1.g.).

The government of Yemen's National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights (National Commission) recorded 86 cases of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment from August 2020 to July and attributed 10 cases to government forces and 76 to Houthi forces.

In a May report Amnesty International described interviews with 12 former detainees who were released by the Houthis as part of a UN-brokered prisoner exchange in 2020 that was managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The former detainees described torture and other forms of mistreatment during their interrogation and detention, including being beaten with steel rods, electric cables, weapons, and other objects; placed in stress positions; hosed with water; and threatened with death or detention in solitary confinement. Former female detainees reported use of sexual violence and rape while in detention. Many detainees continued to suffer from physical injuries and chronic health problems as a result of abuse and lack of health care during their time in detention.

In February, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that forces aligned with the Southern Transitional Council detained journalist Adel al-Hasani in Aden in September 2020 and chained, threatened, and beat him during interrogations. He was later released on March 14 after six months of imprisonment in connection with the charge of “illegally facilitating the entry of foreign citizens,” according to media sources.

In June the United Nations reported on the case of a migrant encountered by a UN mobile medical team in Lahj who, along with other migrants, had been forcibly detained by smugglers and subjected to extortion, forced starvation, and months of severe beatings.

In September, Mwatana for Human Rights released a report covering detentions, disappearances, and torture from 2016 to April 2020. The report alleged that the Political Security Department in Ma’rib, which was run by Islah Party forces loyal to President Hadi, arbitrarily arrested at least 31 individuals and committed at least four cases of torture, leading to at least three deaths. Former detainees held at the Political Security Department said that they were burned, severely beaten, and prohibited from using the bathroom. Witnesses interviewed by Mwatana said they had been arrested at al-Falaj checkpoint, located at the northern gate of Ma’rib city, detained at this checkpoint based on their family surnames, and accused of being loyal to the Houthis. Mwatana found that the Political Security Department did not appear to have responded to orders to release those individuals, including orders issued by the Ministry of Interior and Public Prosecution.

The Mwatana report also alleged that United Arab Emirates (UAE) forces turned the al-Rayyan International Airport in Mukalla city into an unofficial detention center. The report detailed 38 cases of arbitrary detention and 10 cases of torture by UAE forces at the al-Rayyan airport detention site, where former detainees said that they were held in dark and narrow warehouses and were subjected to different forms of torture and other abuse, including deprivation of food and water, electrocution, kicking, whipping, and burning with cigarette stubs. Other detainees said that they were subjected to degrading forms of treatment, such as denial of religious rites, forced nudity, and forced prostration before the UAE flag.

Impunity remained a significant problem in the security forces, including a lack of effective mechanisms to investigate and prosecute abuse. Civilian control of security agencies remained weak throughout the country. There was no information that the government of Yemen, the Houthis, nor the Southern Transitional Council prosecuted any personnel for alleged human rights abuses.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were harsh and life-threatening and did not meet international standards. Monitoring organizations reported: overcrowding; limited air ventilation; extremely high temperatures and humidity; and the lack of access to natural light, bathroom facilities, health care, water, and sufficient meals. No known measures were taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The government of Yemen exercised limited control over prison facilities. The Houthis, the Southern Transitional Council, and rural tribes operated detention facilities within their respective areas of control.

According to the January report of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, the Houthis operated 203 detention facilities, including 78 “official prisons” and 125 private ones. The same report stated that the Houthis also established secret prisons in the basements of so-called military, official, and civilian sites, including residential buildings, schools, and universities.

Tribes in rural areas operated unauthorized “private” detention centers based on traditional tribal justice. Tribal leaders occasionally placed “problem” tribesmen in private jails, which sometimes were simply rooms in a sheikh’s house, to punish

them for noncriminal actions. Tribal authorities often detained persons for personal reasons without trial or judicial sentencing.

Physical Conditions: In April media reported that the Houthi-controlled al-Thawra and Alaya prisons recorded 38 cases of respiratory infections, tuberculosis, psoriasis, and scabies. The reports also noted that prisoners had limited access to natural light. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor in January reported that prisoners in Houthi-run prisons did not receive proper health care, water, electricity, and basic supplies. The report added that the Houthis transferred prisoners from “police stations” to secret and unknown locations without orders from the Houthi-controlled “courts.” COVID-19 reportedly spread widely in three main detention centers in Sana’a: the Political Prison, Habra Prison, and the Central Prison. These prisons did not meet the standards outlined in the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties in August released a report documenting cases of deaths in places of detention since 2015, holding the government responsible for 14 deaths, UAE-affiliated armed groups for 25 deaths, and the Houthis for 27 deaths.

On August 29, the Abductees’ Mothers Association reported that prisoners in the Southern Transitional Council’s Bir Ahmed prison in Aden exhibited COVID-19 symptoms, lived in squalid conditions, received inadequate meals, and did not receive specialized medical care. Prison authorities prohibited family members from providing detainees with medications. Instead, authorities provided painkillers without any medical evaluation.

Administration: Limited information was available on prison administration. There was no information on whether authorities conducted investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment. There was no ombudsman to serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees.

Authorities at government of Yemen-controlled prisons generally allowed visitors to see prisoners and detainees when family members knew a detainee’s location but limited access of family members to detainees accused of security offenses. Family visits were arbitrarily halted in some cases. Authorities permitted prisoners

and detainees to engage in Islamic religious observances but prevented religious minorities from practicing their faiths.

The January 25 UN Security Council Panel of Experts (POE) report covering January to December 2020 noted that the Houthis profited from detainees by demanding payments from relatives to approve visits or releases. The Houthis also reportedly denied family member visits to political detainees.

Independent Monitoring: The conflict prevented prison monitoring by independent human rights observers. Monitoring organizations obtained information regarding the condition of prisons from released detainees and their family members. Some humanitarian organizations reported controlling authorities denied them access to detention centers. They also reported receiving threats related to their work, particularly from the Houthis. Media sources quoting the ICRC spokesperson in December indicated that the ICRC had visited approximately 40 detention sites in Yemen and reached approximately 20,000 detainees in Yemen since visits in Sana'a commenced in 2017, and in Aden in 2018.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, but the GEE found that all parties to the conflict continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain individuals accused of crimes. The lack of functioning legitimate government institutions was the overarching obstacle to rule of law (see section 1.c. and 1.g.).

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law provides that authorities cannot arrest individuals unless they are apprehended while committing a criminal act or served with a warrant. Authorities must arraign a detainee within 24 hours or release them. A judge or prosecuting attorney, who decides whether detention is required, must inform the accused of the basis for the arrest. The law stipulates authorities may not hold a detainee longer than seven days without a court order. The law prohibits incommunicado detention, provides detainees the right to inform their families of their arrest, and allows detainees to decline to answer questions without an attorney present. The law requires the government to provide attorneys for indigent detainees, prohibits

arrests or serving subpoenas between sundown and dawn, and contains provisions for bail. UN, NGO, and media reporting concluded that all parties to the conflict frequently violated these laws and international human rights norms (see section 1.g.).

Houthi-controlled entities and “courts” were accused of granting bail only if they received a bribe.

Tribal mediators commonly settled cases in rural areas without reference to the formal court system.

Detainees often did not know which investigating agency arrested them, and the agencies frequently complicated matters by unofficially transferring custody of individuals between agencies.

Arbitrary Arrest: In its September report, the GEE stated it found reasonable grounds to believe that all parties to the conflict engaged in arbitrary detention. Local NGOs reported arrests by unidentified authorities; frequent incommunicado detentions for long periods of time; and torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman treatment during detention. Mwatana during the year documented 217 victims of arbitrary detention, of which it attributed responsibility for 83 cases to government forces, 86 cases to the Houthis, 41 cases to the Southern Transitional Council, and seven cases to the UAE-backed West Coast joint forces, which were composed of the Giants (also known as Amalika) Brigades, Tihama Resistance, and Guards of the Republic.

Persons arrested were frequently denied their constitutional right to be charged within 24 hours. The law prohibits arrests or serving subpoenas between sundown and dawn, but local NGOs reported forces, including but not limited to the government of Yemen, the Houthis, and the Southern Transitional Council, took some persons suspected of crimes from their homes at night without warrants.

The UN POE during the year investigated 18 cases in which government of Yemen forces were alleged to have committed arbitrary arrest and detentions in the governorates of Hadramawt, Ma’rib, Shabwah and Ta’iz. The POE noted that five out of seven cases in Shabwah the victims were Southern Transitional Council supporters, including a juvenile, and were likely politically motivated.

In October the Houthis unjustly detained dozens of local citizens who had worked for the U.S. diplomatic mission in Sana'a in a caretaker capacity since the mission suspended operations in 2015, seizing their property and subjecting them and their families to threats and abuse. Several of these individuals were still being held at the end of the year; none had been allowed to contact their families at year's end, and none had been charged with any crime. The Houthis in November detained two United Nations staff who remained in custody at year's end.

Houthi-controlled entities continued to detain Levi Salem Marhabi, a Yemeni Jewish person arbitrarily detained for more than five years despite a Houthi-controlled "court" ordering his release in 2019 (See section 6, Anti-Semitism).

According to Reporters Without Borders, armed men associated with the Southern Transitional Council arbitrarily detained two journalists in Aden for several weeks beginning in late September. As of late October, they remained in detention. The UN POE during the year investigated 16 detention cases involving Southern Transitional Council-aligned forces, including the two aforementioned journalists, three cases of a counterterrorism unit using an unofficial prison in Aden, and two cases where individuals were shot and killed at checkpoints in the Tawr al-Bahah area of Lahj governorate.

The UN POE also investigated four cases involving National Resistance Forces and two cases perpetrated by the Giants/Amalika Brigades. Both groups are aligned with the Saudi-led coalition.

Pretrial Detention: Limited information was available on pretrial detention practices during the year, but prolonged detentions without charge or, if charged, without a public preliminary judicial hearing within a reasonable time were believed to be common practices despite their prohibition by law.

In July the Abductees' Mothers Association stated that detainees had been held at Bir Ahmed, which is controlled by Southern Transitional Council-aligned Security Belt Forces, without charge or trial for up to two years. In December the Association reported that eight men abducted by the Security Belt Forces in October 2020 remained in detention without charge, one of whom was feared dead by torture. In September, 14 prisoners in Bir Ahmed held a hunger strike to protest

their prolonged detention without charge, according to the Association.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court:

Information was limited regarding whether persons arrested or detained were able to challenge the legal basis of their detention in court.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but there were no indications that any form of an independent judiciary existed. In September the GEE reported that all parties to the conflict were responsible for the denial of fair trial rights. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) previously reported that the criminal justice system had become largely defunct in the areas where progovernment forces retained or reclaimed control. In most cases, as documented by the OHCHR, detainees were not informed of the reasons for their arrest, were not charged, were denied access to lawyers or a judge, and were held incommunicado for prolonged or indefinite periods.

In areas under Houthi control, the Houthi-controlled “courts” were weak and hampered by corruption, political interference, and lack of proper legal training. Judges’ social and political affiliations, as well as bribery, influenced verdicts.

Trial Procedures

The law considers defendants innocent until proven guilty. Authorities must arraign a detainee within 24 hours or release them. Trials were generally public, but all courts may conduct closed sessions “for reasons of public security or morals.” Judges, who play an active role in questioning witnesses and the accused, adjudicate criminal cases. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. The law allows defense attorneys to counsel their clients, address the court, and examine witnesses and any relevant evidence. The law provides for the government to furnish attorneys for indigent defendants in serious criminal cases; in the past the government did not always provide counsel in such cases. There was no information regarding whether defendants have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense or to free assistance of an interpreter. Defendants may confront or question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. Defendants have the right to not be

compelled to testify or confess guilt and to appeal.

There was limited information available regarding respect for due process during the year. Houthi-controlled “courts” did not respect defendants’ due process rights.

A court of limited jurisdiction considers security cases. A specialized criminal court, the State Security Court, operated under different procedures in closed sessions and did not provide defendants the same rights provided in the regular courts. Defense lawyers reportedly did not have full access to their clients’ charges or court files.

In addition to established courts, there is a tribal justice system for noncriminal matters. Tribal judges, usually respected sheikhs, often adjudicated criminal cases under tribal law, which usually involved public accusation without the formal filing of charges. Tribal mediation often emphasized social cohesion more than punishment, sometimes at the expense of the accused’s due process rights. The public often respected the outcomes of tribal processes more than the formal court system, which was viewed by many as corrupt and lacking independence.

The Houthis continued to “prosecute” more than 20 Baha’is on charges of apostasy and espionage dating from 2018; 19 remained in detention, and five were exiled.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were numerous reports of political prisoners and detainees. After the Houthis took over former state institutions, they detained activists, journalists, demonstration leaders, and other political figures representing various political groups and organizations opposed to the Houthis. The Houthis did not issue public “charges” against detainees and severely restricted or barred information to and access by local or international human rights organizations. NGOs claimed that absent public charges, it was often difficult to determine whether authorities held detainees for criminal or political activity.

In a May report Amnesty International released an interview with a journalist who had been detained by the Houthis before his release in a 2020 prisoner exchange. The journalist described being subjected to a mock execution while detained in

Hudaydah. According to the journalist, guards summoned him at night, handcuffed and blindfolded him, and showed him a hole in the ground that they said would be his grave.

The Abductees' Mothers Association, in a September statement, called for the release of four journalists abducted by the Houthis in 2015 and subjected to physical and psychological torture. The Houthis transferred the four to the central security prison in October 2020 but prevented their families from visiting them. According to Mwatana's annual report, the journalists were facing the death penalty after the Houthi Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a unfairly tried them in April 2020.

According to the GEE's annual report, the Houthis arbitrarily detained, raped, and then released a human rights defender after a prolonged detention and then spread rumors that she was a prostitute, causing her community to ostracize her.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The law provides a limited ability to pursue civil remedies for human rights abuses as tort claims against private persons. There were no reports of such efforts during the year. Citizens cannot sue the government directly but may petition the public prosecutor to initiate an investigation.

Property Seizure and Restitution

The UN POE report covering January to December noted that land disputes were a longstanding problem but increased as armed groups seized increasingly valuable land. The UN POE investigated one case that involved an armed group led by Majid al-Araj, who was affiliated with government of Yemen's forces and the al-Harq family. Al-Araj supporters raided the Al-Harq family home and arrested three family members, one of whom died in detention.

Houthi-controlled "courts" confiscated defendants' property after sham "trials." On August 28, SAM Organization for Human Rights reported that the Houthi-controlled "Specialized Criminal Court" in Sana'a confiscated the financial assets of one individual sentenced to death. The POE reported that Houthis enriched themselves by confiscating assets and funds of individuals and entities.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits these actions, but the government of Yemen was unable to enforce the law. According to human rights NGOs, Houthi-controlled agents searched homes and private offices, monitored telephone calls, read personal mail and email, and otherwise intruded into personal matters without even purporting to possess “warrants” or authorization from Houthi-controlled “courts.”

The law requires the attorney general personally to authorize telephone call monitoring and reading of personal mail and email, but there was no indication the law was followed.

Citizens may not marry a foreigner without permission from the Ministry of Interior, the National Security Bureau, and, in some instances, the Political Security Organization under regulations authorities enforced arbitrarily. The ministry typically approved marriages to foreigners if they provided a letter from their embassy stating the government of the noncitizen spouse had no objection to the marriage and presented a marriage contract signed by a judge. There was no available information on existing practice.

The GEE reported the Houthis threatened and harassed relatives of disappeared detainees who were searching for the whereabouts of their loved ones.

g. Conflict-related Abuses

The United Nations, NGOs, media outlets, as well as humanitarian and international organizations, reported what they characterized as disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by all parties to the continuing conflict, causing civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure from shelling and air strikes. The GEE concluded in September that the government of Yemen, the Houthis, the Southern Transitional Council, and the Saudi-led coalition were “responsible for human rights violations, including arbitrary deprivation of life, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, gender-based violence, including sexual violence, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, the recruitment and use in hostilities of children, the denial of fair trial rights,

violations of fundamental freedoms, and economic, social and cultural rights.”

As of year’s end, the Houthis controlled territory that was home to 70 to 80 percent of the country’s population. The government of Yemen controlled some territory in the south, as did the Southern Transitional Council. Tribal militias and terrorist groups also operated in various parts of Yemen.

Tribal militias and terrorist groups including al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and a local branch of ISIS also committed significant abuses.

Following fighting in 2019 that resulted in the government of Yemen’s departure from its temporary capital, Saudi Arabia helped broker a power-sharing deal, dubbed the “Riyadh Agreement,” between the government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council, which allowed the government’s return to Aden in December 2020. Upon the government’s arrival at Aden airport, a Houthi missile attack killed and wounded dozens of civilians.

Iran provided significant funding and proliferated weapons that have exacerbated and prolonged the conflict. The Houthis repeatedly launched attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure both within the country and in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Throughout the year, the Saudi-led coalition continued military operations against the Houthis (see the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran).

In 2016 the government of Saudi Arabia and other governments participating in the Saudi-led coalition established the Joint Incident Assessment Team (JIAT), which consists of military and civilian personnel from coalition countries, to investigate claims of civilian casualties linked to coalition air strikes or other coalition operations inside the country and coalition adherence to international humanitarian law. The JIAT held five press conferences during the year to announce results of its 24 investigations covering incidents from 2015 to 2020. The GEE’s September report expressed concerns regarding certain aspects of the JIAT’s investigations in several cases and noted concerns with the Saudi-led coalition’s efforts to prosecute officials. From July 2020 to June, the JIAT conducted 18 investigations, but no public information was yet available on eight cases previously referred for military prosecution, according to the GEE.

Killings: The GEE in September reiterated its concern that parties to the conflict, in particular the Houthis, continued to launch what it called “indiscriminate attacks...not directed at a specific military objective” (see section 1.a.). In August the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator stated that hostilities during the year had at that point killed or injured more than 1,200 civilians.

Mwatana documented 64 shelling incidents during the year that killed 49 persons, including 31 children and three women, and injured 173 persons. Two cases were attributed to government of Yemen forces, 43 to the Houthis, 12 to Saudi border guards, and six to UAE-backed forces. Military vehicles that impacted civilians killed 13 persons, including seven children, and wounded 21 persons, according to Mwatana. government of Yemen forces were involved in three of these incidents, the Southern Transitional Council in eight incidents, and West Coast joint forces in two incidents. During the year unattributed live ammunition killed 53 persons, including 18 children and two women, and wounded 142 persons, according to Mwatana.

Saudi-led coalition air strikes in the country reportedly resulted in civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure on multiple occasions. According to the UN’s Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP), air strikes accounted for 185 civilian casualty allegations during the year. This represented a 14 percent decrease compared with 216 strikes in 2020 and a nearly 93 percent decrease since 2018, according to CIMP’s data for civilian casualties linked to air strikes. The nonprofit organization Yemen Data Project, affiliated with The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, assessed civilian casualties linked to air strikes in the first half of the year were the lowest of any six-month period since the start of the conflict. In June the UN secretary-general noted a “sustained, significant decrease in killing and maiming due to air strikes” and delisted the Saudi-led coalition from the list of parties responsible for grave abuses against children in armed conflict. During the last three months of the year, the Saudi-led coalition increased air strikes in and around more populated areas in response to increased Houthi cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia and Houthi ground offensive operations in Ma’rib and Shabwah, which increased civilian casualties. The Yemen Data Project documented 11 civilians were killed and 16 injured in Saudi-

led coalition air strikes in November, and 32 civilians were killed and 62 injured by Saudi-led coalition air strikes in December. The UN POE investigated six Saudi-led coalition air strikes during the year that killed 12 civilians, including two children and one woman, and injured 13 persons. Mwatana's annual report documented 18 Saudi-led coalition air strikes that killed 17 persons, including seven children and two women, and wounded at least 43 persons, including 11 children and eight women.

According to the September report by the Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations, from 2014 to June, Houthi-launched missile attacks on Ma'rib killed 440 civilians, including 61 children, 37 women, and 29 elderly. The report also documented that Houthi-planted landmines, explosive devices, and unexploded ordnances around Ma'rib caused 678 civilian deaths and injuries since the beginning of the conflict.

The UN POE's annual report called the "indiscriminate" use of landmines by the Houthis "endemic and systematic" and a "constant threat to the civilian population." From January to July, 17 children were killed and 15 injured; nine women were killed and five injured; and 37 men were killed and 35 injured from landmines and other improvised explosives. The UN POE also investigated seven incidents of indiscriminate use of explosive ordnance by Houthis during the year, which killed 21 persons, including seven children, and injured others.

Mwatana's annual report attributed 36 landmine explosions to the Houthis, which killed 23 civilians, including 10 children and three women, and wounded 82 persons. The NGO also documented 47 cases of unexploded ordnance that killed 23 persons, including 19 children and one woman, and injured 124 individuals, including children and women.

The National Commission reported in March that a Houthi projectile struck a house in the Hays area of Hudaydah province, killing an adult and a child and injuring an adult and three children.

According to the GEE, in April a rocket reportedly launched from a Houthi-controlled area struck the al-Rawda neighborhood of Ma'rib city and killed one child and injured one adult and three children.

On June 5, Houthis attacked a gas station in the residential neighborhood of al-Rawda north of Ma'rib city with a missile and a drone, killing 21 civilians, including four children, according to the Yemeni Coalition to Monitor Human Rights Violations. The same group reported that on June 10, Houthis killed 11 civilians, including a child, when they launched two missiles and two drones at a mosque on the grounds of a government of Yemen military camp and a detention center for women in the al-Mujama'a neighborhood of Ma'rib city. The National Commission concluded in a June report that Houthi forces launched projectiles at Ma'rib on June 10. When citizens and ambulance vehicles rushed to the location, the area was hit again with two other projectiles, one of which impacted an ambulance, while the other impacted nearby, causing six deaths and injuring 32.

On September 25, a Houthi-launched ballistic missile killed 12 and injured 22 in Midi city of Hajjah province. The victims had gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the country's 1962 revolution, according to media reports.

On October 3, Houthis launched three ballistic missiles that killed two children in the al-Rawda residential neighborhood of Ma'rib city, the same area as the June strike, according to several media and local NGO reports.

OHCHR stated that on September 18, Southern Transitional Council-affiliated forces fired live ammunition indiscriminately in Aden to disperse demonstrators after a grenade was thrown at them. Two persons, including a child, were killed and several others were injured.

According to media sources, in March, AQAP-affiliated gunmen killed eight soldiers and four civilians in an attack on a checkpoint controlled by Security Belt forces aligned with the Southern Transitional Council in the Ahwar district of Abyan governorate.

An explosion on January 1 by unidentified forces in front of a wedding hall in the Hawk district of Hudaydah province killed two children and one adult and injured three children and three adults, according to the GEE's September report.

Abductions: The National Commission documented 1,219 alleged cases of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance carried out by various parties in the period August 2020 to July (see section 1.b.).

Mwatana for Human Rights documented the disappearance of 89 civilians during the year. government of Yemen forces were reported to be responsible for 28 of these cases, the Houthis for 30, the Southern Transitional Council for 13, and Eritrean forces for 18 cases involving Yemeni fishermen detained in the Red Sea.

The GEE reported that on June 30, a group of armed men in a white car, which some sources identified as “antiterrorism forces controlled by the Southern Transitional Council,” abducted a man in Aden.

The SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties reported that on September 4, Southern Transitional Council security forces in Aden arbitrarily arrested four students who had returned from their undergraduate studies in Malaysia and were on their way to Sana’a. There was no update by year’s end.

The Abductees’ Mothers Association reported in October that Security Belt Forces aligned with the Southern Transitional Council unlawfully detained 400 civilians during clashes in the Crater district of Aden.

The UN POE reported that AQAP kidnapped five government of Yemen officials in Kura City of Shabwah Governorate on June 14, released a video of the victims asking for a prisoner swap, and then released the captives on July 5.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture: The GEE reported in October that it had reasonable grounds to believe that the government of Yemen, the Houthis, the Southern Transitional Council, and the governments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE committed torture, gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (see section 1.c.).

Mwatana for Human Rights documented 40 victims of torture during the year and alleged that government of Yemen forces were responsible for 17 cases, the Houthis for nine, and Southern Transitional Council for 14. The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reported in January that the Houthis abused thousands of prisoners in declared and secret prisons, including physical and mental torture. The report was based on interviews with 13 prisoners released as part of an October 2020 prisoner exchange under ICRC and United Nations auspices. Physical torture reportedly included beatings with tools, hanging inmates by their hands, whipping detainees while naked, and using chemical incendiary materials to injure detainees.

Some prisoners were reported to have died from torture and others to have suffered permanent disabilities. Psychological abuse reportedly involved intimidation and pressuring the detainees to confess to crimes they did not commit. The Houthis were reported to have placed prisoners in solitary confinement, confiscated their clothes and medicines, denied them medical care, sexually assaulted them, threatened to harm their families, and extorted money from their families for their release.

Child Soldiers: Multiple sources reported that all parties to the conflict recruited child soldiers. In September the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations to Human Rights announced it had monitored and investigated 132 cases of alleged recruitment of children younger than 15 years between August 2020 and July 1. The government of Yemen and progovernment forces were reportedly responsible for nine of these cases, and the Houthis for 123.

During the year Mwatana for Human Rights documented the recruitment of 121 children. government of Yemen and progovernment forces were reportedly responsible for 8 percent of these cases, the Houthis for 88 percent, the Southern Transitional Council for 2 percent, and UAE-backed West Coast forces for 2 percent. In June 2020 UNICEF reported 3,467 children recruited across the country since 2015, the most recent estimate available.

The National Commission reported that on February 10, government of Yemen National Army forces recruited a 16-year-old boy from Ma'rib governorate, Ismail Abdunnasser Akam, into the 310th Armored Brigade in Ma'rib. The child, who fought alongside progovernment forces against the Houthis in Ma'rib, was reportedly killed in battle.

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and SAM for Rights and Liberties' February report stated that since 2014, the Houthis had recruited 10,333 child soldiers (ages 8 to 17). The report stated that the Houthis forcibly recruited children and put them in hostile areas to engage in direct combat, lay mines, and guard military checkpoints. The report indicated that many of these children had been killed and hundreds were injured. The report also highlighted the Houthis' use of the education system to incite violence, indoctrinate students with extremist ideology, and recruit children to join the fight.

An August report by NGO Moyyun for Human Rights and Development documented in the first six months of the year the killing of 640 children whom the Houthis had forced to fight, and whose funeral processions and burials were broadcasted by official Houthi media outlets. The report estimated that twice as many children were killed in battle but not buried in official ceremonies, and that their names were not published.

During the year the UN POE found that Houthi summer camps and so-called “cultural courses” were “used to: (a) solidify [Houthi leader] Abdulmalik al Houthi’s authority and to consolidate his group’s control over civilians; (b) limit individual freedoms of expression, thought, conscience and religion; (c) recruit fighters, including children; (d) promote violence, hatred and radicalization; and (e) obtain popular support for the continuation of the conflict.” The POE launched investigations into these camps and courses for their role in perpetuating the conflict and in radicalizing child and adults. According to the POE, Houthi media in 2019 stated there were 3,500 summer camps that trained 284,000 students. The POE reported cases in which children refused to return to their parents or condemned their parents as “nonbelievers.” The UN POE report identified 10 cases of children who were taken to fight from “cultural camps,” and the UN POE obtained a list of 562 children, ages 10 to 17, who were recruited by the Houthis and died in battle between January and May.

Combatants for northern tribal groups reportedly included married boys ages 12 to 15. Based on tribal custom, married boys were considered adults who owed allegiance to the tribe. As a result, according to international and local human rights NGOs, one-half of tribal fighters were youths younger than age 18. Other observers noted tribes rarely placed boys in harm’s way as fighters but used them as guards.

The lack of a consistent system for birth registration compounded difficulties in proving age, which at times contributed to the recruitment of children into the military.

Also see the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Other Conflict-related Abuse: All parties to the conflict routinely imposed severe restrictions on the movement of persons, goods, and humanitarian assistance. Continued clashes, fuel shortages, damage to civilian infrastructure (including the food supply chain), and lack of access for and bureaucratic constraints on humanitarian and human rights organizations' ability to reach vulnerable populations contributed to the worsening humanitarian situation. In December a UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) analysis estimated that 20.7 million persons in Yemen needed humanitarian assistance, of whom 12.1 million were in acute need as of February. OCHA also reported that the number of districts with active front lines increased to 48 in October, up from 45 in 2020 and 35 at the end of 2019, further inhibiting aid delivery and civilian protection.

On August 23, the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator stated that due to the war, institutions and public services had imploded, depriving persons of clean water, sanitation, education, and health care; the collapsed economy caused loss of income, including unstable salaries for one quarter of the population who were civil servants, and increased the risk of famine.

In September, HRW stated it documented "severe restrictions by the Houthis, the Yemeni government and affiliated forces, and the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council on the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid." A November United Nations Development Program report estimated that by year's end, the war in the country would have caused 377,000 deaths since it began, of which 60 percent would be from indirect causes.

A Mwatana for Human Rights report in September alleged that all parties to the conflict deprived civilians of objects needed for survival by targeting farms, water facilities, and artisanal fishing boats and equipment that destroyed, damaged and/or rendered useless objects essential to survival, namely agricultural areas, irrigation works, livestock, foodstuffs, water infrastructure, fishing boats, and fishing equipment. Mwatana documented a total of 86 incidents of humanitarian aid obstruction in 2021. It attributed five cases to the government of Yemen, 73 to the Houthis, seven to the Southern Transitional Council, and one to UAE-backed West Coast joint forces.

In October the Ma'rib governorate's human rights office stated that the Houthis' siege of the Abdiya district since mid-September had blocked NGOs from delivering food and medical supplies, describing Houthi actions as "collective punishment." The siege, stated the report, affected 35,000 persons, many of whom were internally displaced persons (IDPs), elderly, women, and children. The same report alleged that the Houthis launched 2,523 attacks against civilians, killed 135 persons, and kidnapped and arbitrarily arrested 3,278 in Abdiya district.

The UN POE's annual report cited multiple barriers to delivering humanitarian assistance in Houthi-controlled areas, including contract subagreement delays; inappropriate requests to share beneficiary lists; pressure to influence program design and implementing partner selection; access and movement restrictions; harassment of humanitarian personnel; threats and physical violence against organizations to apply pressure for policy changes; and removal of families from beneficiary lists that did not allow their children to join Houthi forces. During the year the UN POE documented the detention of three humanitarian workers by the Houthis. In Abyan and Taiz governorates, there were five incidents of unknown actors blocking roads and three incidents of hijacked humanitarian organizations vehicles, according to the UN POE.

UN entities and NGOs reported that the Houthis impeded the provision of COVID-19 care and prevention measures. On April 15, the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs stated that the Houthis withheld data on COVID-19 cases and deaths and prohibited the delivery of vaccines, despite a second wave of the virus in March. According to a September HRW report, the Houthis suppressed factual information concerning COVID-19 and spread disinformation regarding the virus and vaccines, undermining international efforts to provide vaccines in Houthi-controlled areas.

Separately, the Houthis continued to risk an environmental and health crisis by denying UN experts safe passage to inspect the derelict vessel Safer containing 1.14 million barrels of crude oil, which has been anchored off the west coast of the country for more than 30 years. International experts believe that corrosion aboard the tanker and lack of maintenance created an imminent risk of its crude oil leaking into the Red Sea or of an explosion.

There were reports of the use of civilians to shield combatants. Houthi forces reportedly used captives as human shields at military encampments and ammunition depots under threat of coalition air strikes.

The National Commission announced it documented 13 cases in which medical facilities and crews were allegedly targeted. government of Yemen forces and the Saudi-led coalition were reportedly responsible for two cases, and the Houthis for 11. The UN POE reported explosive ordnance hit the al-Tharwa Hospital in Ta'iz on March 5 and May 8, and that Houthi-assigned “supervisors” used hospitals for camps to indoctrinate and recruit students.

The UN Security Council Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on the six grave violations committed against children in times of conflict recorded at least 236 attacks on schools and 245 incidents of military use of educational facilities between 2015 and October. More than 2,500 schools were reportedly destroyed, damaged, and/or utilized for noneducational purposes. An estimated 8.1 million children needed emergency education assistance, a more than sevenfold increase from the 1.1 million reported around the start of the conflict. In addition to negatively impacting education, the conflict imposed devastating and long-lasting effects on the mental and physical wellbeing of children and adolescents.

During the year Mwatana documented 82 cases of attacks on, or military use of, schools. It attributed three incidents to the government and the Houthis jointly, one to the government and the Southern Transitional Council jointly, 72 to the Houthis, five to the Southern Transitional Council, and one to UAE-backed West Coast forces and the Houthis jointly. Mwatana documented 20 cases of attacks on health facilities or harassment of health workers. The organization attributed six incidents each to government, Houthi, and Southern Transitional Council forces, one case to both the government and the Southern Transitional Council, and one case to an unidentified extremist group.

The UN POE documented five attacks from December 2020 to December on commercial vessels in the Red Sea in Saudi Arabian territory and in international waters near Yemen. Three of these attacks were conducted using a waterborne improvised explosive device launched from Houthi-controlled areas or an uncrewed aerial vehicle with parts linked to the Houthis; in one case, limpet mines

were used; no additional information was provided concerning the fifth attack.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

Although the constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for members of the press “within the limits of the law,” the law calls for journalists to uphold national unity and prohibits criticism of the head of state. Government-aligned actors did not respect these rights, and the Houthis significantly restricted freedom of expression in areas under their control using violence and intimidation.

Freedom of Expression: All parties to the conflict severely restricted freedom of expression. Female human rights defenders, journalists, and activists faced specific repression based on gender (see section 1.e., Political Prisoners and Detainees). Local human rights defenders faced harassment, threats, and smear campaigns from the government, Saudi-led coalition, and Houthi forces. Freedom House reported that freedom of expression and private discussion remained severely limited because of intimidation by armed groups and unchecked surveillance by the Houthis. In multiple instances, Houthi-controlled entities went to the homes of activists and political leaders opposed to the Houthis and used the threat of arrest and other means to intimidate perceived opponents and to silence dissent.

The National Commission report for the period August 2020 to July 1 investigated 21 cases of attacks on freedom of expression in different regions. Progovernment forces were responsible for 13 cases, the Houthis for seven, and the perpetrator of one case was not identified.

Freedom of Expression for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: Prior to the outbreak of conflict, the transitional government approved legislation to regulate broadcasting and television channels. A number of domestic private radio and television stations operated under media production company permits, and several stations broadcast from abroad for domestic audiences. The ongoing conflict made reporting increasingly perilous for reporters

and prevented many investigative journalists from accessing parts of the country to report on human rights abuses. Reporters Without Borders wrote that citizen-journalists in all parts of the country were monitored and could be arrested for critical social media posts.

Violence and Harassment: The government of Yemen was unable to protect journalists from violence and harassment. Progovernment popular resistance forces, Houthis, and tribal militias were responsible for a range of abuses against media outlets.

Freedom House assessed that “journalists endure violent attacks and enforced disappearances committed by all sides in the conflict.” According to the GEE, many journalists and human rights defenders stopped working after surviving arbitrary detention and torture; others stopped due to threats to their liberty and physical security, or that of their families, and fear of reprisals. Some left the country entirely. Reporters Without Borders wrote that in areas under progovernment control, militias arbitrarily arrested journalists and subjected them to abusive treatment. The NGO also reported that the Houthis and AQAP were holding approximately 20 journalists, most of them since 2015. Mwatana’s report during the year documented five cases of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, inhuman treatment, and torture committed against journalists and media workers. The report stated the government detained two journalists, the Houthis detained two, and the Southern Transitional Council detained one.

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate stated that from January to June, it monitored 36 cases of abuses against journalists, including 10 by progovernment factions, 20 by the Houthis, and six by the Southern Transitional Council. The group found more than 1,400 infringements of media freedom since the beginning of the war, including 38 journalists, photographers, and other media industry employees killed. When attribution was able to be determined, the reported stated that the government of Yemen was responsible for one case, the Houthis for 18, the Saudi-led coalition for 14, “extremist parties” for two, and three cases were unattributed.

Progovernment Hadramawt governorate authorities in Mukalla detained photographer Abdullah Bukeir in May 2020 on charges of “forming an armed group” and “endangering the governor” because he shared a photo online of a

tissue box with the portrait of Governor Faraj al-Bahsani, reported Reporters Without Borders. Bukeir went on a hunger strike and was hospitalized; there were no updates on his status at the end of the year. Hadramawt authorities detained journalist Hala Fouad Badawi on December 30 at the Military Intelligence Prison in the city of Mukalla, where she remained at year's end. According to the International Federation of Journalists, Badawi's reporting called for improving living conditions and holding authorities accountable for corruption.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported in October that the Houthis detained journalist Youness Abdelsalam in Sana'a on August 4 and held him at the Security and Intelligence Agency despite health problems. Abdelsalam wrote of politics and had criticized the Houthi assault on Ma'rib. The CPJ also reported that the Houthis harassed other journalists and were holding at least four other journalists who were sentenced to death.

On November 9, a car bomb in Aden killed television journalist Rasha Abdullah al-Harazi and injured her journalist husband Mahmoud al-Atmi. Harazi was pregnant when she was killed. The couple was reportedly en route to deliver their baby at an Aden hospital at the time of the attack. Reporters Without Borders suspected that Houthi forces likely assassinated her because of her reporting on Houthi human rights abuses.

According to multiple media sources and NGOs, including Amnesty International and Women Journalists Without Chains, the Houthis detained 10 journalists in 2015 on false charges and subjected them to torture and other forms of abuse. They later released six in a prisoner exchange, but in April 2020 the Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a sentenced four of them to death for espionage; they remained on death row as of December, according to the CPJ. According to the GEE, the court held hearings in February and March without the journalists present.

Women Journalists Without Chains reported in October that Security Belt forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council in Aden city forcibly shut down radio stations Adeniya Radio FM and Bandar Aden and detained the stations' director, Raafat Rashad (see section 1.c., case of Adel al-Hasani and section 1.d., Arbitrary Arrest, Southern Transitional Council arrest and detention of two

journalists).

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Reporters Without Borders noted that objective reporting on the war was rare because parties to the conflict controlled media and threatened independent journalists with arbitrary detention and abusive treatment. All parties to the conflict restricted access for international reporters and rights documentation bodies.

The Houthis controlled the activities of several former state ministries responsible for press and communications. Freedom House assessed that the Houthis blocked certain news websites, online messaging and social media platforms, and satellite broadcasts (see section 2.a., Internet Freedom). The OHCHR reported Houthi forces censored television channels and banned newspapers from publication. Reporters Without Borders assessed that the Houthis blocked online access to some media outlets since their seizure of the former telecommunications ministry.

Libel/Slander Laws: The law criminalizes criticism of the “person of the head of state;” the publication of “false information” that may spread “dissent and division among the people”; materials that may lead to “the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni revolution”; and “false stories intended to damage Arab and friendly countries or their relations.” There was no information during the year on whether the government of Yemen or the Houthis used these laws to restrict public discussion or retaliate against journalists or political opponents.

Nongovernmental Impact: Nongovernmental actors inhibited freedom of expression, including for members of the press. See above sections for more information regarding the actions of progovernment forces and the Houthis.

AQAP detained a journalist in Hadramawt since 2015, according to a Women Journalists Without Chains report in October.

Internet Freedom

Censorship affected internet freedom, and there were notable cases of Houthi intrusion into cyberspace. The Houthi-controlled “Public Telecommunications Corporation” and internet service providers systematically blocked user access to websites and internet domains that the Houthis deemed dangerous to their political

agenda (see Academic Freedom and Cultural Events).

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Media and NGO reports indicated that the Houthis significantly inhibited academic freedom and asserted their influence on cultural events.

According to Scholars at Risk, “For many universities throughout the country, combat and the presence of armed groups have severely undermined the right to education, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. On some campuses, Houthi forces have taken control of operations and interfered in teaching and other academic activities. Faculty and students have also been subjected to detentions and dismissals for being critical of their authority.” The Houthis subjected scholars and students to politicized courses aimed at bolstering Houthi influence and quashing opposition. Students were reportedly required to study speeches and sermons by Houthi military leaders.

Media outlets in April and October reported that, according to the Yemeni Teachers Syndicate, the Houthis killed 1,579 teachers and education workers; injured 2,642 teachers; kidnapped 621 teachers; and replaced 90 percent of school principals with Houthi supporters since 2014.

Moyyun Organization for Human Rights and media organizations reported that the Houthi’s security and intelligence apparatus detained university professors Jalal al-Mathhaji on July 30 and Bilal al-Maitami on August 10 for their social media postings.

In May 2020 Houthi forces detained Hudaydah University faculty member Wadih al-Sharjabi, apparently for social media commentary critical of the Houthis. The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate reported that he remained in custody as of May.

As of March, President of the Sana’a-based University of Science and Technology Hamid Aqlan, detained by the Houthis in January 2020, had been released, according to Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain.

The Houthis have sought to profit from, and glorify, their leaders during cultural celebrations. In October for the holiday celebrating the Prophet Mohammed’s

birthday, Houthis extorted money from residents, businesses, and places of worship to fund celebrations. The Houthis ordered all places of worship, as well as private, public, and commercial buildings, be painted green for the holiday, and according to media sources they shot and killed a man on October 12 in Sana'a who refused to paint his residence and display decorations and photographs of Houthi leaders.

The National Commission documented 32 alleged attacks, primarily perpetrated by the Houthis, on cultural and historical objects and properties between August 2020 and July. Progovernment forces were responsible for two cases, Saudi-led coalition air strikes for two cases, and the Houthis for 28 cases. The commission report detailed that on February 2, Houthis bulldozed the ancient al-Nahrain Mosque in the old city area of Sana'a. Media reported the Houthis confirmed they destroyed the mosque to rebuild it in a style consistent with their faith.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, but these rights were not respected in most of the country.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The law provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, but authorities in all parts of the country placed restrictions on protests. Media reported that three persons were killed on September 14 and 15 in Aden and Mukalla during clashes between protestors and government-aligned security forces (see section 1.g., Killings). Mwatana documented during the year one case of government forces arresting 15 protestors in Mukalla and one case of the Southern Transitional Council arresting three protestors in Lahj governorate. In Houthi-controlled areas pervasive suppression deterred any form of non-Houthi sanctioned public assembly. The POE noted that the Houthis' ability to exercise control relied on its ability to suppress dissent.

Freedom of Association

While the law provides for freedom of association, it also regulates associations and foundations and outlines the establishment and activities of NGOs.

Government of Yemen authorities required annual NGO registration. The law requires the government to provide a reason for denying a registration, such as deeming an NGO's activities "detrimental" to the state. It forbids NGO involvement in political or religious activities. It permits foreign funding of NGOs. The law requires government observation of NGO internal elections.

There were reports the Houthis harassed and detained activists and shut down numerous NGOs, often citing treason or conspiracy with foreign powers. Houthi-controlled entities created the "Executive Office for Monitoring Operations of International Organizations," reportedly to monitor NGO activity. Several NGOs originally based in Sana'a moved to Aden or other cities in government-controlled areas, or abroad.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, there were many restrictions on these freedoms.

In-country Movement: Progovernment forces, the Houthis, and tribal forces, maintained checkpoints on major roads. In many regions armed tribesmen frequently restricted freedom of movement, operated their own checkpoints, sometimes with military or other security officials, and often subjected travelers to physical harassment, extortion, theft, or short-term kidnappings for ransom. Damage to roads, bridges, and other infrastructure from the conflict hindered the movement of goods and persons throughout the country, including hampering the delivery of humanitarian aid and commercial shipments (see section 1.g.).

Women in particular did not enjoy full freedom of movement, although restrictions varied by location. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that harassment at checkpoints of women and girls not accompanied by a male escort, as well as inability to afford transport, hampered women's ability to reach health, nutrition, and other services.

The UN POE's report for the year identified the Houthis' role in planting landmines and possible sea mines in the southern Red Sea as contributing to a lack of freedom of movement.

There were reports that forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council detained some travelers they deemed suspicious (see section 1.g., Abductions).

Foreign Travel: The Houthi takeover of Sana'a in 2014 and the government of Yemen's relocation to Aden in 2015 left no official government authority in control of Sana'a airport customs or immigration functions. In 2016 the Saudi-led coalition ordered the closure of Sana'a International Airport to commercial traffic, permitting only UN humanitarian flights, thereby preventing thousands of local citizens from traveling abroad. Those who needed to leave the country attempted alternative routes that required long journeys across active front lines at high risk and cost.

COVID-19 led to the closure of airports and land borders that further complicated international travel.

In the past women needed the permission of a male guardian, such as a husband, before applying for a passport or leaving the country. A husband or male relative could bar a woman from leaving the country by placing a woman's name on a "no-fly list" maintained at airports. Prior to the conflict, authorities strictly enforced this requirement when women traveled with children. There were attempts by the Houthis to impose similar restrictions on women's international travel. In view of the deterioration of infrastructure and lack of security due to the conflict, many women reportedly declined to travel alone (see section 6, Women).

Exile: There were reports that the Houthis exiled political opponents and religious minorities.

e. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons

According to UNHCR there were 4.2 million IDPs as of February, 79 percent of whom were women and children. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix estimated that 153,546 persons experienced displacement from January 1 to December 25. Continued fighting and new front

lines contributed to the growth of the IDP population, caused some to be newly displaced, prevented IDPs from returning home, and placed IDPs at risk of attacks. The greatest contributor to displacements was conflict in 49 active frontlines across Ma'rib, Hajja, Taiz, al-Hudaydah, al-Jawf, Lahj and al-Dhale'e, according to an August UNICEF report.

government of Yemen and Saudi-led coalition bureaucratic hurdles, Houthi interference, coalition air strikes, and active fighting created difficult and dangerous conditions for humanitarian and human rights organizations to reach many areas of the country (see section 1.g.). COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges of reaching IDPs. Many humanitarian organizations, however, were still able to maintain a presence in multiple locations across the country. According to the United Nations, those humanitarian organizations, local NGOs, and charities that still functioned in the capital supported IDPs and other conflict-affected persons in Sana'a and other parts of the country with food, shelter, nonfood items, and other support. The GEE reported in March that shelling from fighting between government and Houthi forces near IDP camps in the northern outskirts of Ma'rib city injured six women and three children, damaged property, and forced 460 displaced families to flee again.

In August, UNHCR warned of alarming levels of humanitarian need among displaced communities, including for shelter in Ma'rib. Since the beginning of the year, close to 24,000 persons were uprooted by fighting in Ma'rib governorate, which was host to one million IDPs. UNHCR also reported that conditions at settlements were deplorable and overcrowded. Already inadequate shelters were damaged by recent floods and fires caused by cooking. Displaced families often built their own accommodation from blankets and plastic sheeting.

f. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seeker, as well as other persons of concern.

Access to Asylum: No law addresses the granting of refugee status or asylum, and there was no system for providing protection to asylum seekers. According to

UNHCR the government has granted prima facie status to Somali nationals since 1991. The Houthis attempted to take over the refugee status determination process in areas under their control, leading many refugees to have lapsed documentation. According to UNHCR asylum-seekers were not being registered in areas of northern Yemen. UNHCR reported that it continued to focus on protection, registration, and documentation with authorities in government- and Houthi-controlled areas.

UNHCR reported in December that the country was hosting 142,307 refugees and asylum seekers. According to the IOM, there was a significant drop in the number of migrants over the previous two years: 27,693 arrivals during the year compared with 37,500 in 2020 and 138,000 in 2019. The country received refugees from a variety of countries, but mainly Somalia and Ethiopia. During the year approximately 7,000 stranded migrants remained in and around Ma'rib, and approximately 46,000 migrants were forcibly relocated from the north to the south. The number of Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers was expected to increase due to child recruitment in Tigray. Many migrants were attempting to transit the country to reach or return to Saudi Arabia for work and travelled based on false information from smugglers that the conflict was over, according to UNHCR and the IOM. Refugees became increasingly vulnerable due to the worsening security and economic situation throughout the year.

The government of Yemen could not provide physical protection to refugees or migrants; many were held in detention centers operated by the Houthis in the north and by the government in the south. According to UNHCR approximately 65 percent of refugees and asylum-seekers resided in southern governorates.

Refoulement: There were reports of a potential refoulement case in Hudaydah, involving an Eritrean refugee, but additional details were not available.

Abuse of Migrants and Refugees: Migrants faced physical abuse and violence. UNHCR and other organizations stated there were reports of refugees and migrants facing physical and sexual abuse, torture, and forced labor in both Houthi and government of Yemen-controlled facilities, and that many refugees and migrants were vulnerable to human trafficking. In a March report, the IOM noted an increase in the detention and forced transfers of migrants. According to the

September OCHA report, more than 138,000 migrants plus 140,000 refugees and asylum seekers needed urgent humanitarian support. OCHA estimated that 32,000 of those migrants were stranded in dire conditions due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, which impeded their journey to Saudi Arabia. Thousands of stranded migrants were held in detention, sometimes by smugglers and traffickers who exploited the migrants for profit.

According to the IOM, some migrants paid off debts to smugglers and traffickers by working on farms or faced other types of extortion, and some experienced gender-based violence. The vast majority lacked access to water, food, sanitation, and health care. Many migrants became increasingly desperate to return home. In September the IOM wrote that since May 2020, an estimated 18,200 migrants returned by boat to Djibouti or Somalia, reusing the same smuggling network that brought them to the country. According to the IOM and media reporting, in June a boat traveling to the country from the Horn of Africa capsized, resulting in the death of at least 25 migrants, but possibly up to 300.

According to several sources, including the GEE, HRW, and the IOM, the Houthis detained hundreds of mostly Ethiopian and Somali migrants since February in overcrowded wards within an Immigration, Passports and Naturalization Authority “holding facility” in Sana’a. On March 7, HRW and media reports documented that migrants at this facility went on a hunger strike to protest their detention and poor facility conditions. Houthi antiriot police launched several projectiles at the protesters that started a fire, killing at least 45 persons and injuring 202. The same day, the Houthis accused the IOM and the United Nations of failing to provide shelter for “illegal migrants.” A subsequent Houthi investigation indicated that tear gas grenades fired by the antiriot police caused the fire. Four persons were detained and then released four months later after a Houthi investigation concluded the incident was an accident, according to the UN POE’s report.

The UN POE’s report found that from July to September, the Houthis arrested more than 700 migrants in al-Jawf and forced them out of Houthi-controlled territory.

Freedom of Movement: Freedom of movement was difficult for all persons in the country, including refugees, in view of the damage to roads, bridges, and other

basic infrastructure, checkpoints, and COVID-19 travel restrictions. Most of the country's airports had significant damage or were closed to commercial traffic, making air travel difficult for all, including refugees. Particularly in areas controlled by Houthis, unofficial checkpoints blocked and delayed the movement of individuals and goods.

Because of COVID-19, the IOM noted an increase in “forcible transfers” of migrants from northern governorates controlled by the Houthis to the south, which was under the control of progovernment forces. In 2020 the Houthis forcibly transferred more than 15,000 migrants to the south, and forcible transfers continued during the year.

Access to Basic Services: Refugees generally lacked access to basic services due to the conflict. The UN estimated only approximately half of the country's public-health facilities remained functional during the year. Many were closed due to damage caused by the conflict, some were destroyed, and all facilities faced shortages in supplies, including medications and fuel to run generators. According to UNHCR, the Kharaz refugee camp in Lahj governorate was the only refugee camp in the country and hosted more than 9,000 refugees and asylum seekers. UNHCR helped provide services to camp residents.

Durable Solutions: The IOM reported that during the year it had assisted 2,027 migrants, mostly Ethiopians, to voluntarily return to their home country.

g. Stateless Persons

There was no reporting available on stateless persons.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens with the ability to choose their government peacefully through free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage. The outbreak of fighting in 2014 interrupted a government-initiated new voter registration program. There have been no elections since the conflict began.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2014 the major political parties, acting within the National Dialogue Conference, endorsed an extension of President Hadi's term, in view of the inability to hold elections due to the conflict. Thirteen parties signed a Peace and National Partnership Agreement that temporarily ended the violence associated with the Houthis' movement into Sana'a and called for implementation of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes, including holding elections and establishing a new constitution.

In 2015 the Houthis declared the constitution null and void, disbanded parliament, and announced the formation of an appointed Supreme Revolutionary Committee as the highest governing body. Houthi-aligned members of the General People's Congress, the largest political party, announced the formation of a Supreme Political Council and the reconvening of parliament in Sana'a, followed by the announcement of a "national salvation government." This so-called "government" and its institutions did not receive international recognition, and elections for parliament were not held.

In 2019 the government of Yemen reconvened parliament for the first time since 2015, in Sayoun, but parliament did not reconvene since that time. The last parliamentary elections were in 2003.

The 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the government of Yemen and Southern Transitional Council sought to create a more inclusive cabinet and unite military forces under the government of Yemen umbrella. After more than a year of stalled implementation, a newly formed government arrived in Aden in December 2020.

In September the new UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg began meeting with all parties to the conflict to identify a new way forward for an inclusive and enduring peace.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The law requires political parties to be national organizations that do not restrict their membership to residents of a particular region or to members of a particular tribe, religious sect, class, or profession. The former ruling General People's Congress party split into several regional factions and a separate faction under Houthi control in Sana'a. A Houthi

court in October sentenced 11 parliamentarians to death for their support to the government, following a similar sentence for 35 parliamentarians in March 2020. Freedom House reported in May that the Houthis had severely suppressed political dissent in areas under their control since 2015, and that political parties faced severe repression by authorities and armed groups, impeding normal political activity.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: No laws limit participation of women or members of minority groups in the political process, and they did participate in past elections. The National Dialogue Conference of 2013-14 recommended a quota of 30-percent participation by women in all branches of government services, but this was never realized. No women during the year held ministerial positions in the government. Women also were underrepresented in UN-led peace talks. Women have been active in civil society, including participating in protests and demonstrations in the south, publishing a newspaper in al-Mahrah governorate that advocated for sustainable development and peace, developing a feminist road map for peace, negotiating the release of detainees and political prisoners, and working through civil society organizations to hold authorities accountable.

Freedom House wrote that the *muhamasheen* (the marginalized) account for as much as 10 percent of the population but suffered discrimination in politics and society. The 2015 National Dialogue Conference Outcomes included targets for youth and women's political participation, but not for muhamasheen participation, while the Constitutional Drafting Committee included one draft article pledging to promote their political participation. The Sana'a Center reported that the muhamasheen lacked political power in local communities to lobby for inclusion in development projects and humanitarian beneficiary lists. The National Union for the Marginalized announced plans to establish the Yemeni Justice and Equality Party to represent minority communities.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

While the law provides for criminal penalties for official corruption, the

government did not implement the law effectively. There were reports of official corruption during the year. The constitution requires approval of one-fifth of the members of parliament to conduct a criminal investigation of a deputy minister or higher-ranking official. The law then requires a two-thirds majority in parliament and presidential permission to bring criminal investigation results to the general prosecutor for indictment. The government has never used this procedure, and parliament has not met since 2019.

Corruption: Corruption was pervasive throughout the country, and observers reported petty corruption in nearly every government office. Job applicants were often expected to purchase their positions. Observers believed tax inspectors undervalued assessments and pocketed the difference. Many government officials and civil service employees received salaries for jobs they did not perform or multiple salaries for the same job. Corruption also regularly affected government procurement.

International and local observers, including Transparency International, agreed corruption was a serious problem in every branch and level of government, especially in the security sector. International observers claimed government officials benefited from insider arrangements, embezzlement, and bribes. In the view of informed local observers, the leading cause of the 2011 protests that eventually led to the existing conflict was anger concerning pervasive corruption. Media reported in October on the alleged connection between high-level officials in the president's office and monopolies on oil trading.

The government developed an anticorruption strategy for the years 2010-14, and has laws on public tenders, financial disclosure, and anti-money-laundering, all of which have been inconsistently implemented. From its 2007 establishment to the Houthi takeover of Sana'a in 2014, the independent Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC) received complaints and developed programs to raise awareness of corruption; it included a council of government, civil society, and private-sector representatives. A lack of capacity, particularly in terms of financial analysis, hampered its work. The Riyadh Agreement called for reactivating the SNACC and "strengthening it with honest and professional figures and... [re-]activating its oversight role." The government of Yemen's prime minister formally announced the "reconstitution" of the SNACC in 2019, and in

January announced the formation of a committee to investigate management of state revenues at ports of entry. President Hadi in December announced an audit by the Central Organization for Control and Audit of Central Bank operations from the time its headquarters relocated to Aden in 2016 to the end of the year. The UN POE reported that Houthi figure Ahmed Hamid announced in November 2020 that he was taking steps to combat corruption in connection with international aid, using the former SNACC, but the POE's sources described the actions as an internal power struggle and an attempt to cover up more serious corruption.

The UN POE's January 22 letter to the UN Security Council noted numerous examples of corruption affecting the government of Yemen, including corruption in the Yemeni Coast Guard allowing Houthi smuggling of arms and equipment; corruption in the security forces, including inflated payrolls; and serious corruption within the Ministry of Defense impacting payment of salaries and allocation of personnel and equipment.

The POE report also identified corruption among Houthi-controlled entities, including in selection of civil appointments, intimidation of opponents, and diversion of humanitarian aid. The POE's investigations found that the Houthi "budget" did not include humanitarian assistance and no detailed breakdown of aid receipts and expenditures were readily available.

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

International human rights organizations stated their personnel were unable to obtain Saudi-led coalition permission to use UN flights into and out of Sana'a since 2017. Independent observers had to take commercial flights to government of Yemen-controlled areas in the south and then travel by land across dangerous front lines to other areas. The only internationally backed, independent monitoring group's mandate was terminated during the year (see below).

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: On October 7, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) voted 18 in favor of and 21 against renewing the GEE's mandate following assertions from members of the Saudi-led coalition that

the group was not sufficiently independent; seven countries abstained. A group of more than 60 nongovernmental and civil society organizations issued a joint letter strongly condemning the UNHRC's vote, calling the GEE "the only international and impartial body investigating serious violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law perpetrated by all parties to the armed conflict in the country." They noted that "ending the GEE's mandate will only entrench impunity, and act as a greenlight for all parties to the armed conflict to continue to commit war crimes and other serious violations."

Prior to the end of its mandate, the GEE noted that the government of Yemen had not granted the group access to the country, and the Houthis had not granted access to areas under their control.

The government of Yemen and the Saudi-led coalition coordinated with the United Nations, particularly through the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen, to oversee delivery of commercial imports. All parties to the conflict impeded aid distribution by UN and humanitarian organizations. There were serious obstacles to delivery from checkpoints, road conditions, bureaucratic impediments, and armed conflict. Houthi interference, delays, and access constraints hampered aid organizations' ability to fully assess and address humanitarian needs (see section 1.g., Other Conflict-related Abuse.).

Government Human Rights Bodies: The government of Yemen's National Commission was established in 2015 to investigate all alleged human rights abuses since 2012. The commission consists of a chair and eight members with legal, judicial, or human rights backgrounds. The National Commission continued to investigate and report on human rights conditions during the year and conducted training with the United Nations. The UN deputy high commissioner for human rights in 2017 renewed its cooperation with the National Commission but noted its publications failed to comply with international recognized methodology and impartiality standards.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, but it does not criminalize spousal rape. The punishment for rape is imprisonment for up to 25 years. The government did not enforce the law effectively. By law authorities may prosecute rape survivors on charges of fornication if authorities do not charge a perpetrator with rape. According to law, without the perpetrator's confession, the rape survivor must provide four male witnesses to the crime. There were no reliable rape prosecution statistics, and the number of rape cases was unknown. Human rights NGOs stated their view that underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence cases was common.

The GEE concluded that individuals affiliated with the government of Yemen, progovernment forces, and the Houthis committed rape. The Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence reported in March that increased conflict heightened the risk of sexual violence, including against migrants in border areas. The POE's report during the year documented sexual violence against two internally displaced women in Aden committed by members of the Security Belt Forces, and cases of sexual violence in detention settings committed by the Houthis. On February 25, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2564 (2021), sanctioning Houthi leader Sultan Zabin for his role in weaponizing sexual violence. The special representative on sexual violence previously assessed that the Houthis systematically targeted female political leaders and activists since 2017. The GEE previously reported that in Houthi-controlled areas, women were threatened with sexual violence, as well as prostitution charges, physical harm, and arbitrary and secret detention if they spoke out against the Houthis. Mwatana during the year documented nine rape cases and one attempted case of rape of which two cases were attributed to the government, six to the Houthis, and two to the Southern Transitional Council. Among the survivors were four girls, five boys, and a woman.

Muhamasheen women were particularly vulnerable to rape and other abuse because of the general impunity for attackers due to the women's low-caste status (see section 6, Systematic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination).

The law states that authorities should execute a man if convicted of killing a woman. The law, however, allows leniency for persons guilty of committing an “honor” killing or violently assaulting or killing a woman for perceived “immodest” or “defiant” behavior. The law does not address other types of gender-based abuse, such as forced isolation, imprisonment, and early and forced marriage.

The law provides women with protection against domestic violence, except spousal rape, under the general rubric of protecting persons against violence, but authorities did not enforce this provision effectively. Survivors rarely reported domestic abuse to police and criminal proceedings in cases of domestic abuse were rare. The most recent UN Population Fund (UNFPA) study reported that 46 percent of gender-based violence incidents in 2018 were physical assault, 22 percent psychological abuse, 17 percent denial of resources, 11 percent child marriage, 3 percent sexual abuse, and 1 percent rape. Oxfam reported in February that women and girls do not report violence due to fear of being killed or exposed to further violence. Citing a September 2020 baseline study published in February, Oxfam reported that 71 percent of respondents justified male violence against wives, women, and girls for violating social norms. UNFPA estimated that 6.1 million women and girls needed domestic violence services.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not prohibit FGM/C, although a 2001 ministerial directive banned the practice in government institutions and medical facilities, according to HRW. According to UNFPA, the most recent data from 2013 indicated 19 percent of women ages 15 to 49 have undergone FGM/C, with prevalence rates as high as 80 percent and 85 percent in al-Mahrah and Hadramawt, respectively. FGM/C was less common among young girls ages 15 to 19 than among women ages 45 to 49.

Sexual Harassment: No laws specifically prohibit sexual harassment, although the penal code criminalizes “shameful” or “immoral” acts. Authorities rarely enforced the law, however; sexual harassment was a major problem for women.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

The ongoing conflict and ensuing humanitarian crisis made it difficult to find reporting on the government of Yemen's approach to reproductive rights, including possible interference by the government with the right of couples and individuals to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children. The conflict led to a breakdown of the healthcare system, and women and girls, including survivors of sexual violence, did not have access to essential reproductive health services. The UNFPA reported that only 20 percent of health facilities offered maternal and child health services, due to lack of supplies, staff shortages, damage due to conflict, inadequate equipment and supplies, and inability to meet operational costs. As a result five million women and girls of childbearing age and 1.7 million pregnant and breastfeeding women had limited or no access to reproductive health services.

UNFPA reported in March that a woman died in childbirth every two hours, almost always from preventable causes, that violence frequently limited access to hospitals, and that 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women were acutely malnourished. According to the most recent World Bank and UNICEF estimates (2017), the maternal mortality ratio was 164 deaths per 100,000 live births. Most births took place at home, and only 40 percent of births were attended by skilled health personnel, according to 2020 UNFPA estimates. The adolescent birth rate remained high at 60 births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19, according to 2017 UN Population Division estimates. UNFPA reported during the year that underage pregnant girls frequently died and lost their babies due to lack of access to hospitals, exacerbated by displacement.

Access to medications and pharmaceutical products, including contraceptives, also decreased due to both the conflict and Houthi interference with distribution of supplies. Reports of Houthi interference with contraceptive distribution continued.

According to Mwatana's annual report, the Houthis issued a decision that banned family planning for being inconsistent with "faith identity."

Discrimination: Women faced deeply entrenched discrimination in both law and practice in all aspects of their lives. Mechanisms to enforce equal protection were weak, and the government did not implement them effectively.

Women cannot marry without permission of their male guardians; do not have

equal rights in inheritance, divorce, or child custody; and have little legal protection. They experienced discrimination in areas such as employment, credit, pay, owning or managing businesses, education, and housing (see section 7.d.).

A male relative's consent was often required before a woman could be admitted to a hospital, creating significant problems in a humanitarian context in which the men of the household were absent or dead. Women also faced unequal treatment in courts, where a woman's testimony equals half that of a man's testimony. A husband may divorce a wife without justifying the action in court. In the formal legal system, a woman must provide justification.

Any citizen who wishes to marry a foreigner must obtain the permission of the Ministry of Interior (see section 1.f.). A woman wishing to marry a foreigner must present proof of her parents' approval. A foreign woman who wishes to marry a male citizen must prove to the ministry that she is "of good conduct and behavior."

Women experienced economic discrimination, and the Houthis prohibited women from participating in certain professions (see section 7.d.). The UN POE's report stated that the Houthis "have detained, tortured, maimed, sexually violated or repressed politically or politically active women, who opposed Houthi views." The Houthis, according to the UN POE report, use claims of prostitution and record sexually compromising videos to socially isolate and maintain leverage over women to deter them from taking any political role.

Mwatana reported that the Houthis discriminated against women in the workplace, restricted their freedom of movement, and interfered with their daily lives. The NGO stated that in January, Houthis forced the removal of all female employees of a restaurant in Sana'a and coerced the manager to sign a pledge not to hire women, which took away the livelihoods of 30 persons. The Houthis issued a document in September that prohibited girls from carrying smartphones and wearing makeup when they attend weddings and parties, and from riding in a car without a male relative escort. Violators would be fined and barred from employment with relief agencies. Mwatana in two days documented 11 incidents of movement restrictions placed on women in Hajjah governorate during the year.

The GEE and Amnesty International documented the case of Asmaa Omeissy,

whom the Houthis arbitrarily detained in 2016, denying her fair trial rights and outside medical treatment, keeping her in solitary confinement, and torturing her. As of June 30, her appeal to the Supreme Court was pending. The GEE noted that the “morality” charges against Omeissy represented a “weaponization of gender” intended to “suppress the political participation of women and enable violations against women and girls.”

On February 20, in the Shamlan neighborhood of Sana’a, armed individuals detained actress and model Entisar Abdul Rahman Mahyoub al-Hammadi and a colleague on charges of “prostitution.” Human rights observers contend the women were targeted because of their work in the fashion industry. They were taken to a local police station and then transferred to the Houthi-controlled “Criminal Investigation Department” in Sana’a governorate, where they were reportedly tortured and kept for 10 days while their families were unaware of their whereabouts. According to the GEE, the Houthi-controlled “specialized criminal prosecution service” declined to prosecute case due to lack of evidence and referred it to the public prosecution of West Sana’a. The latter ordered a 45-day extension of the women’s detention and their transfer to the Central Prison in Sana’a. Amnesty International in May called for the Houthis to halt plans to subject al-Hammadi to forced virginity testing, which it described as a form of sexual violence and torture under international law. As of June 30, al-Hammadi’s lawyer, who received threats, was unable to access her case file. On November 8, she was “convicted” of crimes including “prostitution” and “drug use” and “sentenced” to five years in prison.

Systematic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

Although racial discrimination is illegal, some groups, such as the muhamasheen community and the *muwaladeen* (citizens born to foreign parents), faced social and institutional discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and social status. The muhamasheen, who traditionally provided low-prestige services such as street sweeping, generally lived in poverty and endured persistent societal discrimination. Muhamasheen women were particularly vulnerable to rape and other abuse because of the general impunity for attackers due to the women’s low-caste status. The GEE reported the muhamasheen continued to be targets of extreme sexual violence (see section 6, Rape and Domestic Violence).

Media reports referencing muhamasheen activists noted that while social castes and slavery were abolished in the 1960s, tribal justice systems reinforced historical patterns of discrimination. There have been no further media reports on slavery since 2015, when the Yemeni Wethaq Foundation for Civil Orientation reported that slavery remained commonplace in some districts of Hajjah governorate and Hudaydah, with a total of 190 cases in 2012. Walk Free estimated in 2018 there were 85,000 victims of modern slavery in the country, or 3.1 percent of the population, but that due to the impossibility of conducting surveys under conflict, data likely underestimated the problem. This broad category included forced labor and debt bondage, human trafficking, and forced and early marriage.

During the year the Houthis reportedly targeted muhamasheen communities to recruit fighters. In July, Houthis killed four muhamasheen and injured another in Amran province after they refused to join Houthi fighters on the front lines.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship derives from a child's parents. A child of a citizen father is a citizen. Women may confer citizenship on children born of a foreign-born father if the child is born in the country. If the child is not born in the country, in rare cases the Ministry of Interior may permit a woman to transmit citizenship to the child if the father dies or abandons the child.

There is no universal birth registration, and many parents, especially in rural areas, never registered children or registered them several years after birth. The requirement that children have birth certificates to register for school was not universally enforced, and there were no reports of authorities denying educational or health-care services and benefits to children based on lack of registration. The lack of birth registration reportedly led courts to sentence juveniles as adults, including for crimes eligible for death sentences.

Education: The law provides for universal, compulsory, and tuition-free education from ages six to 15. Public schooling was free to children through the secondary school level, but HRW reported that many children, especially girls, did not have easy access to education.

According to an October OCHA report, the number of out-of-school children more

than doubled since the start of the conflict, reaching more than two million during the year. Two-thirds of all teachers had not received a regular salary for more than four years due to the conflict, including in government-controlled areas. Some unpaid teachers left the profession to seek alternative means of supporting themselves, further reducing educational opportunities of children. More than 523,000 displaced school-age children could not access education due to lack of space in existing classrooms. Even where schooling was available, the quality of education was negatively impacted by the conflict and humanitarian and economic crises.

The GEE raised concern that some parties to the conflict deprived children of their right to education through military use of school buildings, manipulation of education, and targeting of educators. Government of Yemen Special Security Forces reportedly used a school in Shabwah as a military barracks and detention facility, and the Houthis allegedly used four schools for weapons storage, manufacturing, and training.

Child Abuse: The law does not define or prohibit child abuse, and there was no reliable data on its extent. Authorities considered violence against children a private family matter.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: Early and forced marriage was a significant, widespread problem, and the conflict has exacerbated the situation. There is no minimum age for marriage, and girls reportedly married as young as age eight. The UN special representative on sexual violence noted in March that out of desperation, IDPs arranged marriages for girls as young as age 10. UNFPA estimated that one in five displaced girls ages 10 to 19 were married. According to a UNICEF report issued during the year, 9 percent of girls were married before age 15, and 32 percent of girls were married before age 18. The United Nations reported that forced marriage and child marriage for financial reasons due to economic insecurity was a systemic problem.

According to UNICEF girls forced into early marriage often remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and unfulfilled potential, and married boys and girls were more vulnerable to being coerced into child labor or recruited into fighting (see section 1.g., Child Soldiers).

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits pornography, including child pornography, although there was no information available on whether the legal prohibitions were comprehensive. The law criminalizes the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The law does not define statutory rape and does not impose an age limit for consensual sex.

Displaced Children: As of November, according to UNICEF, half of all IDPs in the country were children.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

Media outlets reported in March that approximately four Jews remained in the country after the Houthis expelled 13 individuals from three families in March. One Jewish citizen, Levi Marhabi, remained in Houthi-controlled detention and was subjected to torture, according to the NGO Insaf. The Houthi movement continued to use anti-Semitic slogans. Anti-Israel rhetoric often blurred into anti-Semitic propaganda. The Houthis propagated such materials and slogans throughout the year, including adding anti-Israel slogans and rhetoric into the elementary education curriculum and books. The UN POE's report noted that children in Houthi summer camps are instructed to shout the Houthi slogan, which contains the phrase "death to Israel, curse the Jews."

Members of the Jewish community were not eligible to serve in the military or national government. Authorities forbid them from carrying the ceremonial national dagger.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and laws affirm the rights of persons with disabilities. The laws permit persons with disabilities to exercise the same rights as persons without disabilities, but the government did not effectively enforce them. The law mandates the establishment of special educational institutions to provide basic education to persons with disabilities. Additional articles of the law stated education was a right for persons with disabilities. UNICEF reported in 2015 that “schools did not necessarily accept children with disabilities” due to inaccessible buildings, lack of specialized materials, staff, and transport. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor was responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Ministry programs aimed at integrating children with special needs largely halted with the outbreak of the conflict. The Yemen Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of People With Disabilities reported in 2018 that only 750 students with disabilities were still studying at the university level, and that 190,000 students with disabilities had been deprived of education after 300 specialized centers shut down. The war continued to worsen access, as well as social stigma and official indifference. Information concerning patterns of abuse of persons with disabilities in educational and mental health institutions was not publicly available.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

While there were no reports of social violence against persons with HIV or AIDS, the topic was socially sensitive and infrequently discussed. Discrimination against persons with HIV or AIDS is a criminal offense. Information was not available regarding whether there were incidents of discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The government did not consider violence or discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) persons “relevant” for official reporting.

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, with the death penalty as a sanction under the country’s interpretation of Islamic law. There have been no

known executions of LGBTQI+ persons in recent years.

Due to the illegality of and possibly severe punishment for consensual same-sex sexual conduct, few LGBTQI+ persons were open regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. Individuals known or suspected of being LGBTQI+ faced discrimination.

There was one active LGBTQI+-related social media site. HRW reported in July 2020 that Saudi Arabia sentenced a Yemeni man who had posted a video advocating for LGBTQI+ rights to 10 months of prison, to be followed by deportation to Yemen, where he feared for his life. No further information was available on his situation.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of citizens employed in the private sector to join unions and bargain collectively. These protections do not apply to public servants, day laborers, domestic servants, foreign workers, and other groups who together made up most of the workforce. The civil service code covers public servants. The law generally prohibits antiunion retaliation, including prohibiting dismissal for union activities. The relevant law is still in effect, but the Houthis control the former ministries responsible for its implementation in areas under Houthi control and they did not implement the law.

While unions may negotiate wage settlements for their members and may conduct strikes or other actions to achieve their demands, workers have the right to strike only if prior attempts at negotiation and arbitration fail. They must give advance notice to the employer and government and receive prior written approval from the executive office of the General Federation of Yemen Workers' Trade Unions (GFYWTU). Strikes may not be carried out for "political purposes." The proposal to strike must be put to at least 60 percent of all workers concerned, of whom 25 percent must vote in favor for a strike to be conducted.

While not formally affiliated with the government, the GFYWTU was the only official federation and worked with the government to resolve labor disputes. A

union's ability to strike depended on its political strength. Authorities often accused unions and associations of being linked to a political party. The International Trade Union Confederation in June and July issued a letter and statement that accused the government of Yemen of setting up organizations under their control "in an effort to weaken the GFYWTU," and of confiscating property from the federation in Aden and Shabwah. The government-aligned Yemeni Teachers Syndicate advocated for educators and in April accused the Houthis of killing or wounding more than 1,500 teachers in six years and of indoctrinating children.

The government of Yemen was unable to enforce labor laws due to the ongoing conflict. The government did not enforce laws on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. It is unclear whether penalties for violations were imposed and if they were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law does not prohibit and criminalize all forms of forced or compulsory labor, and the government of Yemen did not effectively enforce the law. Penalties were not commensurate with those for analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping. The law prescribes up to 10 years' imprisonment for any person who "buys, sells, gives [a human being] as a present, or deals in human beings," but the statute has a narrow focus on transactions and movement. Although information was limited, in previous years there were numerous reports of forced labor in both urban and rural areas. *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper reported in 2019 that prominent Houthis held more than 1,800 citizens as slaves and servants who work in their residences and places of work.

Migrant workers and refugees were vulnerable to forced labor. For example, some Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Somalis were forced to work on khat farms (khat is a flowering plant that contains stimulants); some women and children among this population may also have been exploited in domestic servitude.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The government of Yemen has child labor laws, but they do not adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking. The government did not effectively enforce the child labor law. Penalties were not commensurate with those for other analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping. The Combating Child Labor Unit within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor was responsible for implementing and enforcing child labor laws and regulations.

The country's minimum employment age was 14 or not lower than the age of completion of compulsory education, which is generally age 15. Children younger than 18 with formal contracts may work no longer than six hours a day, with a one-hour break after four consecutive hours, on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

According to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) most recent data published in 2013, more than 1.3 million children participated in the workforce. This number is likely higher because two million children were out of school. Children undertook work activities in child soldiering, construction, carpentry, blacksmithing, agriculture, handicrafts, fishing, and as street vendors. The media has reported children working in butcher shops. The most serious risks facing child workers were in the areas of child soldiering, fishing, carpentry, construction, and blacksmithing, in which they could be exposed to major injuries or risk drowning or death in combat. Children working as itinerant sellers were the most common and faced extended exposure to summer and winter elements that were harmful to their health. Most of the child workers were concentrated in governorates outside of central government control. According to previous HRW assessments, nearly one-third of all combatants in the country were younger than age 18 (see section 1.g., Child Soldiers).

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings> and the Department of Labor's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law does not address employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, political opinion, national origin, social origin, gender identity, HIV status, or other communicable diseases. Discrimination based on race, gender, and disability remained a serious problem in employment and occupation. The law prohibits women from working the same hours as men and in jobs deemed hazardous, arduous, or morally inappropriate. The law reserves 5 percent of government jobs for persons with disabilities, but the law was rarely enforced. It is unclear whether penalties were commensurate with laws related to civil rights, such as election interference.

There were reports of migrant workers mistreated in detention centers before being sent back to their country of origin due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The muhamasheen experienced racial and employment discrimination. Persons with disabilities faced discrimination in hiring and limited access to the workplace (see section 6, Persons with Disabilities). Foreign workers may join unions but may not be elected to office. According to an ILO survey from 2013-14, prior to the conflict, 6 percent of women participated in the labor force. Since then other research showed that women entered the workforce, often by creating businesses, to fill the gap left by spouses who lost their income or died. According to a 2019 report by the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, women were more likely to work for NGOs than men.

The Houthis discouraged women from obtaining work outside of the Houthis' gender norms. On January 29, Amnesty International condemned the Houthis banning women from working in restaurants and cafes as “shameful” and “discriminatory.” On September 21, media outlets and human rights activists exposed a Houthi directive that banned women in the Bani Hushaish area of Sana'a from working with NGOs, as well as prohibiting their use of smartphones and cosmetics. Violators risked excessive fines.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: The minimum wage for private sector employees must be at least the public sector minimum wage. The law mandates that wage payments

depend on the terms of the employment contract. Employees may be paid on a monthly, fortnight, weekly, or hourly basis.

The minimum civil service wage was more than the estimated poverty income level; however, civil servants were not paid consistently for several years, and most salaries were too low to provide for a large family. It is unclear whether there were penalties for violations or if they were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud.

Workdays are limited to eight hours. Work weeks are limited to 48 hours that must be distributed over six working days followed by one day of paid rest. The maximum working hours during the month of Ramadan cannot exceed six hours per day or 36 hours per week. The law also states that an employee's working day must have at least one hour of rest so that any continuous period of work does not exceed five hours. Friday is the day of rest but may be substituted for another day of the week if required for work. Most entities worked 40 hours a week distributed over five days. Many workshops and stores operated 10- to 12-hour shifts without penalty.

Occupational Safety and Health: Occupational safety and health (OSH) laws and standards were not appropriate for the main industries in the country. The government generally did not enforce them. Penalties for violations of OSH laws were not commensurate with those for criminal negligence. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remained with OSH experts and not the worker. The law does provide workers the right to remove themselves from a hazardous workplace. Workers may not challenge dismissals based on such actions in court.

The law obligates employers to provide healthcare to workers for pre-employment medical examinations and for periodic medical exams while employed.

The law requires employers to: maintain a healthy and safe workplace; sufficiently ventilate and light the workplace during working hours; protect workers from environment pollutants at work; provide protection from light, noise, heat, and moisture hazards; provide sufficient potable water; provide separate toilets for men and for women; provide fire extinguishers; ensure emergency exits are well maintained; provide work clothes for all laborers; train workers on work-related

risks and protection measures; and raise awareness concerning health and safety through a vocational health and safety supervisor.

There was no credible information available regarding work-related accidents or fatalities during the year.

Informal Sector: According to the March report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, informal employment represented 78 percent of total employment. The safety law does not apply to the informal sector, including domestic servants, casual workers, or agricultural workers. Working conditions were poor in the informal sector, and wage and overtime violations were common. Foreign migrant workers, youth, and female workers typically faced the most exploitative working conditions.